1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

very often is, by divorce or death, or the movement of its members to a new place. While such changes occur, the household remains; its personnel may change, its landholdings may expand or contract, and its relations with other households through its household head may shift—but people see it as an organization in terms of which settlements are built into larger units; into wards, hamlets, villages, cities, and finally, the state itself.

The personnel of a household is based on that of the family, and generally moves through a cycle that may involve several alternatives to the usual pattern. Let us start with a couple. A young man marries for the first time, and in about sixty percent of the peasant cases recorded for three rural villages in Bornu, he brings his wife to the vicinity of his father's compound or moves into a section of his father's compound. If the latter is the case, he will move to his own compound close by after his own conjugal family (his wife or wives and children) increases in size either through the birth of children or the acquisition of more wives. When his own children grow up, his daughters leave to marry and return from time to time because of divorces or separation from their current spouses. Because many sons bring their wives to their father's household or close by, the original father finds himself the nominal head of a growing patrilocal extended family which, as we shall see in Chapter 6, can in time become a separate ward or sub-ward of the town. When the father dies, the oldest son or the most capable or successful of all sons takes over the compound of the dead father. Lands and goods are apportioned among the male heirs, although the person taking the father's role sometimes takes half the land and divides the rest equally among the living heirs. Thus in one case a man with three brothers took his father's fields and divided them in half. One-half he kept for himself, and the other half he split among the three brothers.

A problem that frequently emerges at this time is that of the mothers of half siblings—the wives of the dead man. The man who takes over his father's compound or household tends to install his own mother there as a dependent, since most old women are without husbands.[2] If she is a vigorous woman, she can become a powerful person in the household. Indeed in the royal household she has a special title, as we have seen, and was traditionally a noble-woman of great power. The other wives of the dead man must go and live with their own kinsmen, usually one of their sons. In one case this problem was intensified by the fact that the household head, a powerful political leader, had only one son and that by a concubine. When the present head dies, his senior wife, a woman of very powerful upper class affiliations will have to leave and her own slave—a woman very much junior to her—will be installed as the senior woman of the household. Such eventualities can cause tension between the members of any household who know that some day the power and authority relationships within the household will change hands.

In the same vein, siblings tend to drift apart after the death of their father. Even though they live close by one another, their unity and cooperation is not as great after the father's death as before. On the other hand, this can be ameliorated by social and economic factors which are important to keep in mind. Thus if a senior brother takes over a powerful political role, or a lucrative economic one, and

[2] As a woman approaches old age she finds it extremely difficult to remarry and thus most old women are resigned to being beyond the marriageable period of their lives.

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man must have had a very successful life and belong to the upper ranks of society where power and wealth give him the opportunity to build up the necessary following during his lifetime. Peasants can achieve the ideal if they have through accident or a successful career been able to build up political and economic resources that enable them to maintain a growing compound. For those men who cannot obtain a position of semi-independent leadership in their old age, there is also the possibility of membership in someone else's organization. In this way a man can look forward to a secure position even though his own household as part of it is a very small one. For many other men old age brings neither leadership nor successful subordination. A son, friend, or neighbor may regularly help with the farm plot, or if less successful the man and perhaps an aging wife live alone in a small compound in their village. He is given some general respect as an older person. If he lives in the same community as his children there may be young grandchildren constantly around, and whether they live in the same community or not he may be fostering one of more grandchildren in his compound. Whatever the alternative, and unlike our own society, old age even at its poorest provides an accepted and respected place for old men.

Many old women after a number of divorces or the death of a husband with whom they have lived for many years do not or cannot marry again. This does not seem to be the case nearly so often for the men. If the woman has a son, he is expected to keep her in his compound which may have been the compound of her husband. If she has no son, she may stay in or near the compound of some other relative, including an ex-husband whom she refers to by using the kin term applied to "brother."[4] I have seen a few old women living alone in the compound of their dead husbands although, like old men, most of these seemed in constant touch with young children. Whether or not she is being supported economically by her relatives, any old woman in the lower ranks of society has an accepted role as a small retail seller who sits daily in front of the compound or small market stalls around the town, or near a well, selling a few ground-nuts, sundries, cooked food, or tobacco flowers for staining the teeth of women. Four old women in Magumeri, one of whom lived completely alone, had saved up money to buy themselves a native well, and these four supported themselves on a fairly steady income from the sale of the water. Such practices are not suddenly started; a woman raises extra cash throughout her entire life by petty trade or the sale of cooked foods and with the onset of old age she merely extends these activities into a full-time occupation.

Women from higher ranking households remain in the compounds of their sons or relatives. Very likely they have been secluded as young married women and this continues in their old age. The widow of a high-ranking man is on occasion supported in his compound by the heir to the household. However, if the new household head has his own aging mother alive, then it is more common for the widow to leave her dead husband's household and return to her own kin since her co-wife is now taking over the position of mother of the head of the household. Many of these upper class women have more capital than their lower class counterparts. This started with their dowry and may have been increased through inheritance and trade since the time of their youth. Such trade is carried

[4] The Kanuri use a single kin term to refer to brother, sister, cousins of any kind, and half brothers and sisters, although each of these can be distinguished if need be.

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on by intermediaries because of the seclusion common among upper class women. If the activity has proven successful during their life it is carried on into old age, and if not then it is dropped. Thus old women, like men, in Bornu have a place in society. It is not generally a position of great authority, although there are some notable exceptions. Certainly, however, deference and respect for the aged is a universal feature of good Kanuri manners. Blessing the young is a cultural symbol of this respect. Old people bless young people when the latter go on trips or there is some special event such as a birth or the naming of a new baby. The seriousness with which such blessings are given and received is evidence of the importance placed on the special capacities of wisdom and propriety that the Kanuri associate with old age.

Death

Just as pregnancy marks the potential beginning of life, so death marks the end. The Kanuri have a quiet accepting attitude toward death; it is unpleasant, but it is always there. The high mortality rate for children, and the desirability that as many as possible in a community attend a funeral means that Kanuri adults attend many more of these ceremonies than people in western society. Thus death and funerals are much more commonly noted and accepted than in the United States where the entire subject is considered repugnant.

The Kanuri believe that going to funerals helps the deceased person to achieve paradise. The more prayers said by as many people as possible and as many religious leaders as possible, then the better are the chances of success. Indeed this is not only true in death but throughout life. People go to a particular funeral because the deceased was "a man of our town," or they attend one in another locality because the person was a relative or a friend. Not to go, even to the funeral of a very low status person of one's own village, is unthinkable. A high ranking official of Magumeri remarked at a funeral of a poor, very old, butcher that only twenty years ago he would not have shaken the hand of such a man, but times have changed. However, when asked whether he would have attended such a man's funeral in former times he looked incredulous; there could be no question about it if they were of the same community. Thus death ties a community together and expresses one's membership in it. No matter what other differences may exist between people, there is one occasion when the only criterion for active participation is a common residence in the same locality.

The compulsion to go to funerals is very strong. Thus a young woman who teaches in the Bornu secondary school system and is highly westernized in many of her attitudes told me that she had to go to a funeral about 100 miles away in the bush. This involved very uncomfortable travel by lorry, then a long horseback ride in the rainy season. However, she never once considered the possibility that she might not attend even though there was every likelihood she would miss the ceremony. Her relatives were having a funeral—therefore she must go; there was no choice although she preferred not to go.

Kanuri burial ceremonies themselves are held as close to the first morning after death as is possible. I observed only one exception to this rule; a very old man

587 of the wife, in numbers, bring her clothing and belongings through the streets to her new husband's home. Later that night the bride herself comes, accompanied by her very close friend (kususu). There is no ceremony corresponding to that which takes place when a virgin marries. The following day, her friends cook the morning meal for her. After that, she cooks her own
[595] food. A man with a previous wife who marries a zogor will sleep with his new wife for three consecutive days. After the three initial days, he spends one night with each wife in regular rotation, as is the normal practice of a man with more than one wife.

• 589 Bachelors are very rare. The primary informant in this
[115] area, Ya Mogorom, a woman of about fifty who is herself a grandmother several times, could not think of a single adult male who had never married, though she said that it did occasionally occur. Spinsters are just as rare, and Ya Mogorom could name only a sixteen year old girl who was not yet married as an ex-
583 ample of an adult female who had never married. Common-law
836 marriages as such do not occur. A woman living with a man but not married to him is his nomgamtom, and is quite distinct from
587 his wife as she never cooks for him. Until the age of fifty a zogor will remarry; beyond that she does not attempt to remarry. A man will remarry as long as he is able to have intercourse.
581 Sometimes old people marry for convenience, after they can no
887 longer have intercourse. She cooks his food, and he provides her with clothing and other things.

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429 economic subordinates more closely to the exercise of his power and authority. In cases where this is less of a consideration (e.g. in marriages between peasant households) then the sheer economic benefit of the marriage to the luwali becomes the primary determinant in the
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565 decision. Among peasants it is not considered desirable to marry with traditionally regarded low status persons (male or female speaking) such as drummers-entertainers, slaves, butchers, blacksmiths, tanners, petty brokers, or anyone whose birth is considered illegitimate.(conceived out
[848] of wedlock). This results in a certain amount of endogamy among these occupation groups excluding illegitimates who are pariahs in the eyes of all.

582 Kanuri marriages are governed by the following rules of incest.. Marriages with parents or their siblings, own full or half siblings are forbidden, and this rule carries over to compounds into which ego's parents have remarried where no real biological relationship with ego's parent's new spouse's children obtains. It is culturally prescribed that ego (a male) may not marry a matrilateral parallel cousin, although several upper class informants felt that this was a custom of the people and not a Muslim ordinance. No marriages of the latter variety were observed during the field research. It is considered wrong (i.e. shameful) to marry wives of consanguinal kin of any generation after they have divorced ego's kin member. No reason was given for this rule, but no exceptions to its practice were observed.

It is considered inappropriate for a man to marry a woman older than himself. But age is known in only a vague general way and most men claim they are married to women younger than themselves.

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•589 During his adolescence and increasingly so as he grows older, a young man strikes up liaisons with divorced women who are looking for

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[589] husbands. These women (lower) are sexually available to all men, and are given gifts and market money for the sexual privileges they grant. The typical adolescent male has his first sexual experiences with a woman older than himself. However, when he decides to marry he usually tries to find a woman of roughly his own or of a junior age group.

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885 First marriage marks the beginning of adult status for a man. The event announces and enables a move towards semi-independence which is aided and abetted by the avoidance relation between his father and his wife, as well as by the subject-matter avoidance of his marriage in conversations with his parents. Furthermore, he now commands an independent source of cooked food, which he can use for hospitality and its return, whereas previously he was obliged to others for this service. Kanuri males consider this to be one of the most important reasons for getting married, especially at the lower ranks of society.

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885 To understand the value placed on this function of marriage it must be realized that men from about the age of fifteen or sixteen onwards like to eat in the company of other men. Without a wife, a young man must join a group of eaters one (or more) of whose wives prepare the food. For this privilege he is obligated to the food provider, an obligation which may include hoeing his farm, going on messages for him, helping him repair his compound, etc. With a wife a young man can return eating favours on the same terms, thus equating himself to his hosts and creating obligation (a) for return meals from men who have wives, and (b) of a diffuse nature from men who have none. It will be shown later that a wife is also valued as a socio-economic asset in the determination of her husband's productive capacities.

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583 Today, almost all men in rural areas, and many in the city, derive some of the money for marriage from the cash crop. This determines

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As a man and woman grow older they demand and are given progressively more independence of choice in all matters including marriage. This is more likely among the peasants. For here second marriages are not as likely to be used as mechanisms for creating, strengthening and maintaining relationship by the girl's luwali to whom it is traditional to return on the occasion of divorce. It is more likely that the upper class woman will come under the power and authority of her luwali in subsequent marriages than the lower class person who is left freer to make her own liaisons. The upper class woman although not in purda during her divorced status must be much more delicate and restrained about her movements. This necessity to maintain an appearance of probity lends itself more easily to the manipulation of the upper class woman by her luwali after her first one or two divorces than does the relative freedom of the lower class woman. Among all classes an extremely young divorcee of under fifteen is almost sure to have little freedom of choice for her second husband, although cases of such early divorce are rare.

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During the harvest season (November to February) divorced women (gower) are more serious about trying to pin down one of the temporary liaisons to marriage. Men at this season are similarly inclined but tend to shop around a little before settling on one choice, unless their minds were made up before the harvest season opened. With a few exceptions (notably female) both sexes consider married status desirable and for a man, having two wives is better than having one. The exceptions to this rule are women who are either very attractive to men and thus enjoy themselves economically and sexually as unmarried women, and/or women who refuse to give up their independence for marriage. These factors are often related and as we shall see there is room for the expression of all of them within marriage. Men marry if their harvest

581 [585] [221] [595] [589]

595 iram to spouses living at that time in his compound. In addition he gives to his current wives presents of soap, perfume, clothes, etc. equal to about half the value of similar gifts given to the new bride. In practice this is extremely various, depending upon the wealth of the male, and his estimation of his present spouse(s)' potential jealousy and opposition over the new wife. One informant was observed who, after giving his wife a substantial cash gift (under half of the luwal-iram), matched the clothes given to his new bride one for one by gifts to his present wife. It is almost universally accepted that successive wives should be younger than one another. This is followed quite widely in practice, at least for the age difference between present wife (only one) and incoming wife. This insures that the authority and rank ordained by custom be represented by an age difference which always allows for a smoother operation of the principle that the wife already in the compound is kamu kura (senior wife).

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162 Frequency figures on polygyny from Magumeri town are a-
• [589] typical because of its position as District Headquarters. This means that a larger proportion of single males are present than is usual in rural areas, especially since Magumeri is one of the smaller District Headquarters, and the administrative personnel and their subordinates (these latter are often single young men) make up a larger element of
[125] the population than is commonly the case. The following table on num-
[361] ber of wives is taken from figures gathered between July and November of 1956, given by 78 household heads in the towns of Magumeri, Chingowa, (1) and Ngubura, which form a triangle to the south of Magumeri, each being

[595] (1) Therefore these data were collected before the harvest of the 1956 crop which brings on the marrying season. The respondents ranged across an extremely wide range of occupations, but all kept up a compound and all worked farms near their towns.

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562 available only to her husband and this turns to sexual freedom and experimentation when she is a divorced woman.(1)

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562 This results in much marital infidelity on the part of married men and women. As we have seen, this can take a sanctioned and an unsanctioned form for men, while for married women any extra-marital sexual intercourse is considered to be adultery. Thus X, a Magumeri man, well known for his extra-marital sex relations woke up a local official late one night and asked him to come and see the woman whom X had brought to his compound. This was to ensure public recognition of the fact that he was sleeping with a _gower_ (divorced [593] woman) and not someone's wife. When asked what his wife thought of his behaviour X replied that she did not like it. He added that it was none of her business and she could leave him if she wished.

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684 On the other hand, Kamuri men are usually extremely suspicious of their wives. One man whose wife attended local dances used to come to these evening celebrations to make sure that no one shone a flashlight on his spouse while she was dancing. The only time that this did occur the husband reported the incident to the Village Head who in turn locked up the _voyeur_ for the night. This same woman was observed on several occasions entering single men's sleeping huts while her husband was away on trading trips.

837 Even one seemingly submissive woman, the wife of an upper class man, was observed to blossom out suddenly and visit strange

[589] (1) This is not meant to imply that the woman has complete freedom, even when divorced. A woman may have one or two men supporting her and sleeping with her while she is divorced (one at a time is more common), often for only periods of a week or two at a time. Women who sleep with too many men at the same time while divorced are considered bad marriage risks and tend to be regarded as acting somewhat more like a prostitute, rather than a divorced woman, who _should_ really be going through a series of "trial" marriages, one of which will eventually lead to the real thing.

000 come progressively remote from their own.

548 [369] Exceptions to the normal pattern occur. In some cases the girls become prostitutes (alangnoma), although this is more common in the urban areas where there is less visibility and higher demand for this stigmatised occupation. In Magumeri village, there was one active prostitute of whom it was said she had never been properly married. 589 Another young woman of about eighteen to twenty years had not as yet been married. In 1956, she was still wearing the small girls' hair style, which she finally changed in 1957 to that of an adult woman. Her slightly sub-normal intelligence was socially recognised, and to this characteristic was attributed her inability to obtain a husband. She was, by 1957, trying to identify herself as a gower, i.e. a divorced woman. That is to say, she declared herself openly available sexually to all males. Informants claimed that her chances of finding a husband were exceedingly slim. Another girl of fourteen or fifteen had already passed puberty and was unmarried. Rumour and gossip ran around that she was not a virgin, i.e. adult men had slept with her, and it was said that her father would have a very difficult time ever finding a husband who would take her as wife. The child seemed to be suffering increasingly from her inability to identify herself as a girl awaiting marriage or as a developing young woman which all her agemates had by now become.

885 522 871 These exceptions exemplify a basic precept of Kanuri culture. In order to obtain a normal status in the society a female must have had a first marriage in or around the time of puberty. Failure to do so inhibits her achievement of respectable adult status. This is one of the primary reasons why European Secondary education for Kanuri girls receives so much opposition from the local population. The idea